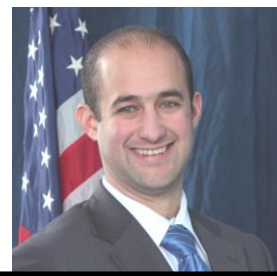


NEWS FROM DEPUTY PRESIDING OFFICER

ROB CALARCO



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Bellone and Deputy Presiding Officer Calarco Announce Opioid Lawsuit

Suit filed against 11 pharmaceutical companies citing negligent and misleading practices

HAUPPAUGE, N.Y. – Today County Executive Steve Bellone and Deputy Presiding Officer Rob Calarco, joined by Legislator Sarah Anker, announced the filing of a lawsuit against 11 opioid pharmaceutical companies who misled doctors and consumers about the addictive properties of the drugs. The Suffolk County Legislature unanimously approved taking action against manufacturers of prescription opiates in September 2015 (Resolution 810-2015). That bill was co-sponsored by Legislators Anker, Hahn and Spencer.

“Suffolk County is truly facing an opioid epidemic as addiction and misuse of these drugs have troubled many residents in our communities, torn families apart and has senselessly taken away thousands of lives. We have made it a priority here to explore and launch new, evidence-based initiatives and tools to combat this problem, but that alone is not enough. We must hold those who have misled and knowingly misinformed our residents and medical practitioners accountable,” said Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone. “I applaud Deputy Presiding Officer Rob Calarco and the Suffolk County Legislature for taking action against these companies, and we will continue to collaborate as to how we can stop the opioid epidemic that has plagued our region and nation.”

“Since these drugs were introduced twenty years ago, we have seen prescriptions skyrocket while being told addiction rates are under 1%,” stated Deputy Presiding Officer Rob Calarco. “Meanwhile opiate-related abuse has increased exponentially – that is not a coincidence. I cannot stand by while these companies lie to consumers and doctors while making billions of dollars in profit off people’s suffering.”

“We have to do everything possible to get the resources we need to provide adequate treatment options for this epidemic that is devastating our families and killing our young people,” stated Legislator William Spencer, MD. “The only way we are going to be successful is if we look for shared responsibility and accountability for all parties involved. Our taxpayers should not have to bear this burden alone.” Legislator Spencer is a pediatric specialist.

“In filing these actions against opium producers, Suffolk County is not only making a statement, but taking a stand on pharmaceutical companies putting profits before the lives of its patient consumers,” said Legislative Majority Leader Kara Hahn, sponsor of several initiatives that have reduced incidents of opioid related

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overdoses in the County. “We are in the midst of an epidemic that all too often originates from a pill not pushed by a criminal, but rather by the marketing departments of Big Pharma.”

“The filing of a lawsuit against 11 opioid pharmaceutical companies is a major step forward in addressing the issue at the very core of the opioid epidemic in Suffolk County,” stated Legislator Sarah Anker. “Certain pharmaceutical companies have made it their priority to profit off of providing misleading information to the general public about the addictiveness of the powerful prescription opioid drugs they market so strongly. We must continue to fight to hold those responsible for fueling an epidemic of opioid misuse accountable and forge ahead in the war on legal drugs.”

Since OxyCotin was approved by the Federal Drug Administration in 1995, sales of the drug have increased from \$45 million in its first year to over \$3.1 billion annually. Aggressive marketing techniques, including increased sales representative visits to doctor’s offices accompanied by a deceptive marketing campaign, have led to a prescription rate of over 207 million per year. The United States consumes more than 80% of the world’s opiates and 99% of the global hydrocodone supply.

The lawsuit contends that not only did the companies know that with prolonged use the rate of addiction increases, but that their effectiveness wanes, requiring increases in doses to achieve pain relief. When those prescriptions run out, users turn to illegal street drugs such as heroin in order to meet their needs.

“We cannot afford this addiction any longer,” stated Deputy Presiding Officer Calarco. “These drugs are unsuitable for many users and it’s ruining our families. Between 2009 and 2013 Suffolk County saw 337 heroin-related deaths, the highest in New York State. Many of those people turned to heroin after their legal prescriptions ran out. That is 337 people too many.”

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Deputy Presiding Officer Rob Calarco represents the 7th Legislative District which includes Patchogue, East Patchogue, North Patchogue, Medford and Gordon Heights. Smaller portions of Blue Point, Bellport, Middle Island Fire Island are also included in the District. He is Chairman of the Government Operations, Personnel, Housing & Consumer Protection committee, Vice Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, as well as a member of the Health Committee and the Ways & Means Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature.